

# *News for the Pews*

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The year 2020 has ended and 2021 has begun. We pray for those who caught Covid-19 last year, especially for those who died and for those who may suffer long-term health problems stemming from the disease. May we all be much less affected by the pandemic this year. Maybe in hindsight (2020 hindsight..get it, get it?) we will be able to put the disease and its effects in perspective and return to a normal existence.

One good way of dealing with current conditions is to be thankful for our many blessings. I'm sure I speak for Father Pius, Deacon Brian and all those on the Parish Council in thanking all those who so generously responded to our November request that parishioners donate to the church amounts comparable to what they would spend on the Thanksgiving Celebration. It became quite clear at the December PC meeting that donations had surged above 2019 levels in November and December. Be sure that the money will be put to good use. While we're at it, we should all thank those who keep the parish functioning. At the top of the list are Father Pius, Deacon Brian and Parish Secretary Vicki Ross, but we also have to include Music Director Amy Sexton, Mr. Fix-it Jim Rofkahr, Mr. Do-It-All Bob Conrad, Flower General Lynda Evans, Rectory Cleaner Myka Elmore and others too numerous to mention in this space.

I think we should also send special thanks to Noel and Laurie Sagulo, who just finished successfully leading the Five First-Saturday devotional program, as well as serving as teachers of the current RCIA class. Noel is also Grand Knight of our Knights of Columbus Council and District Deputy for our area. All of these people are fine leaders, but folks do get tired and feel the need to move on. Thus, we need to consider stepping up to fill leadership roles despite our misgivings and/or reluctance to take on added responsibilities and

jobs than we currently bear. We may fall short of the ideal (as demonstrated by the sloth of the previous Grand Knight (ahem)) when compared to the energy Noel has brought to the office, but we will sometimes surprise ourselves if/when we give ourselves a chance. We will often find that our fellow parishioners will lend strong support to those who ask. And, of course, we have the support of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

There wasn't a great deal of business to cover at the December PC meeting, but one thing we did was commit to bi-monthly rather than quarterly collections for the Council of Churches Food Bank. Demand for food and help has surged, thereby exerting greater pressure upon the organization's finances. Please donate generously.



If you study the artwork in the church, you'll see numerous instances of individuals carrying staffs, spears and even a scythe. But, as far as I can tell, there's only one instance of someone using a cane. Where is it?

As usual, the Daughters of Mary held their monthly meeting after this morning's First Saturday program. The ladies wanted me to offer their most sincere thanks for the parish's outstanding support for their December bake/craft sale. They sold all their baked goods quickly and received several sizeable donations. One of the main results of Saturday's meeting was to ask for nominations of new officers to be acted upon at the meeting scheduled for Saturday, February 6 at

9:00 AM. They'll be looking for volunteers to take responsibility for programs/events during the various months of 2021. In addition, they scheduled a Novena to be prayed January 28-February 5 for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that revitalizes the Daughters organization. They also tentatively scheduled another bake/crafts sale for the weekend of February 13-14.

The recent surge in Covid-19 infections and deaths has persuaded state leaders of the Knights of Columbus to shift to virtual meetings during January and February. See the December 30 e-mail from GK Noel about this change and expect another e-mail or text with a link and instructions on how to join the online meeting set for next Wednesday, January 6 (after 6:00 PM Mass). Please remain involved with the Knights and other organizations. We can do so much more collectively than we can individually.

Something different for the parish is in the works. Given the omnipresence of the pandemic and the abortion issue, as well as the desire to get more parishioners involved, Noel, on behalf of the Knights of Columbus, has sparked a move to do a local March for Life event this month (probably on the weekend of January 16-17). Tentative plans are to plant crosses representing the number of aborted babies in Altus City Park and hold a memorial service. Details are tentative at this point. They will be firmed up during a planning meeting to be held after 9:00 Mass tomorrow (Sunday, Jan 3). This could be a very fulfilling event, especially if we can attract a large crowd. Please add your voice to those of millions of other Christians protesting this horrific practice. Also, remember the old saying, “silence means assent.”

The pandemic continues limiting events and gatherings. Meetings of the St. Joseph Society seem likely to be suspended for the foreseeable future. That means no winter/spring Trivia Night event this year. Maybe we'll do one this summer.

The quilters aren't letting the pandemic (or is it pandemic?) slow them down. They will

resume their monthly quilting sessions next Tuesday (1/5). They're open to visitors, guests and especially, new members. Really, and for True! They even said I could join, which, while seeming desperate, shows how welcoming they will be. If you don't know how to quilt, they'll teach you. If you don't want to quilt, they'll “let” you thread needles. And you can be sure they'll talk to you.



This picture gives you context for the close-up on page one and immediately becomes recognizable as being from the mural “The Finding of Jesus in the Temple” on the south side of the church's rear doors. I thought the reference to this subject was very appropriate for early January, since this is the last Biblical mention of Jesus before he begins his public ministry.

Daniel “I didn't do it” Vaught